

**What is Claimed is:**

1. An isolated, attenuated, non-functional *vif* protein.
2. The protein of claim 1 wherein said protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22, and SEQ ID NO:23.
3. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding an attenuated, non-functional *vif* protein.
4. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 3 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence which encodes an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22 and SEQ ID NO:23.
5. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 3 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:27, SEQ ID NO:28, SEQ ID NO:29, SEQ ID NO:30, SEQ ID NO:31, SEQ ID NO:32, SEQ ID NO:33, SEQ ID NO:34, SEQ ID NO:35, SEQ ID NO:36, SEQ ID NO:37, SEQ ID NO:38, SEQ ID NO:39, SEQ ID NO:40, SEQ ID NO:41, SEQ ID NO:42, SEQ ID NO:43, SEQ ID NO:44, SEQ ID NO:45 and SEQ ID NO:46.
6. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a protein of claim 1 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

7. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 3 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.
8. A recombinant expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 3.
- 5 9. The recombinant expression vector of claim 8 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence which encodes an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, 10 SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22 and SEQ ID NO:23.
10. A host cell comprising a recombinant expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 3.
11. The host cell of claim 8 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence which encodes an amino acid sequence selected from the group 15 consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22 and SEQ ID NO:23.
12. A purified antibody directed against an attenuated, non-functional *vif* protein.
- 20 13. The antibody of claim 12 wherein said protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22, and SEQ 25 ID NO:23.

14. A method of immunizing a mammal against a virus comprising administering to cells of said mammal, a nucleic acid molecule that comprises a nucleotide sequence that encodes an attenuated, non-functional *vif* protein, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is expressed in said cells.

5 15. The method of claim 14 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence which encodes an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, 10 SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22 and SEQ ID NO:23.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:27, SEQ ID NO:28, SEQ ID NO:29, SEQ ID NO:30, SEQ ID NO:31, SEQ ID NO:32, SEQ ID NO:33, SEQ ID NO:34, SEQ ID NO:35, SEQ ID NO:36, SEQ ID NO:37, SEQ ID NO:38, SEQ ID NO:39, 15 SEQ ID NO:40, SEQ ID NO:41, SEQ ID NO:42, SEQ ID NO:43, SEQ ID NO:44, SEQ ID NO:45 and SEQ ID NO:46.

17. The method of claim 14 wherein said virus is selected from the group consisting of human immunodeficiency virus, feline immunodeficiency virus, bovine immunodeficiency virus, Visna virus, and simian immunodeficiency virus.

20 18. A plasmid comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding an isolated, attenuated, non-functional *vif* protein.

19. The plasmid of claim 18 wherein said protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:5, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:17, SEQ ID NO:18, SEQ ID NO:19, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, SEQ ID NO:22, and SEQ ID NO:23.

20. The plasmid of claim 18 wherein said nucleotide sequence is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:27, SEQ ID NO:28, SEQ ID NO:29, SEQ ID NO:30, SEQ ID NO:31, SEQ ID NO:32, SEQ ID NO:33, SEQ ID NO:34, SEQ ID NO:35, SEQ ID NO:36, SEQ ID NO:37, SEQ ID NO:38, SEQ ID NO:39, SEQ ID NO:40, SEQ ID NO:41, 5 SEQ ID NO:42, SEQ ID NO:43, SEQ ID NO:44, SEQ ID NO:45 and SEQ ID NO:46.